



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

## THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

By J. J. SLECHTA, M.A.,

Formerly of the United States Consular Service.

The scope of this article does not admit of a detailed analysis of the varied phases of the Monroe Doctrine as originally enunciated and subsequently developed into a permanent feature of our foreign policy. It is only necessary to remind students of the subject that the predominant motive actuating President Monroe and contemporary statesmen in promulgating this doctrine was one of selfishness—if anxiety for self-preservation may be called selfish.

The dangers which the United States sought to avert by this means were two-fold: First, the acquisition of territory in the western hemisphere by European powers and the consequent peril to the supremacy of the United States in the western world; and second, the overthrow of newly established republics in South America and the resulting loss of prestige to democratic forms of government, of which this country was the champion and which were on trial before the world at large. Naturally enough, altruistic motives were even at that time suggested as explanatory of this nation's newly expounded policy, but a careful study of the literature of the question convinces that any such motive was subordinate to the conviction that the cause of our own democracy would suffer from any further encroachment of Europe on this hemisphere.

The thesis which the writer has chosen to defend may be stated at the outset and is simply this: The Monroe Doctrine should be maintained by the United States substantially in the form in which it was conceived by its originators. In one particular, only, should this be qualified. In view of the unquestioned supremacy now attained by this country and the impossibility of any successful aggression by any foreign power, the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine can best be expressed in negative rather than positive terms.

Instead of the assertion that no European power shall be per-

mitted to acquire additional territory in this hemisphere, the doctrine should embody the proposition that any aggression on the part of a European power, which may be deemed dangerous to the supremacy of the United States in this hemisphere, shall meet with the forcible opposition of this country.

If it is sought to determine what advantages might reasonably be expected to result from such a foreign policy, it is necessary to consider the changed relationship between the United States and other countries of the new world. In the first place, it has long been evident that leading powers of Latin America not only regard themselves as independent of the protection of this country, but actually resent any attitude of protection from the United States. Those who are familiar with the viewpoint of leading South American nations have no doubt that possible aggression from the United States is really very much more feared by most of them than aggression from any European power.

Any foreign policy, therefore, which contemplates anything in the nature of gratuitous protection of powers which want nothing of the sort from us, leaves this country in a wholly anomalous situation. Another objection to what might be called an altruistic foreign policy is that, whenever this country finds itself obliged to bring pressure to bear upon one of its neighbors in order to settle a claim or controversy of its own, a cry of woe goes up from all Latin America, calling attention in the most ironical terms to the supposedly protective feature of the Monroe Doctrine. This is what happened in the Alsop claim settlement with Chili, when the whole Spanish-American press was united in a severe denunciation of the United States. The point of the whole matter is that if the United States follows the interpretation given the Monroe Doctrine for the past sixty years, Latin America takes our protection as a matter of course; expects it, in fact, when it is needed, and disclaims any desire for it when not needed.

The Monroe Doctrine, as originally conceived, would leave Latin America free to work out its own salvation, as it very much wishes to do, and would relieve the United States of any responsibility in connection therewith except in so far as its own destinies might be affected. Then if, in case of unjust aggression from Europe, a Latin-American country should appeal to the United States for assistance, such assistance might be given quite apart from any obli-

gation arising from a fixed policy. In that way only will Latin America recognize this country's foreign policy as genuinely disinterested.

It is the failure of American foreign policy to recognize the fact that disinterested statesmanship is not accepted at its face value in Latin America which constitutes its greatest weakness. An impartial analysis of the causes for this consistent failure at once discloses the underlying weakness in all our international relations with Latin America. Probably John Hay was the only secretary of state this country has ever had who knew how to handle Latin-American questions properly because he was great enough to see every issue from the Latin-American point of view. This great asset of a statesman can come, not merely from a knowledge of history, but from an appreciation of its significance. Only an administrative authority totally destitute of the attributes of an intelligent statesman would choose to disregard the certain effect of a nation's antecedents and of the character of its people upon their method of thought in shaping a foreign policy. Few and far between have been the American statesmen who possessed in a high degree the ability to gain from an intelligent retrospect of a country's antecedents a perspective which should enable them to determine a foreign policy based upon strong future probabilities and not upon utter impossible eventualities. The holiest and best of intentions are trash without such an understanding of the significance of history and national character.

Nothing could more clearly demonstrate the need of such farsightedness than the blundering policy of this country in the Mexican situation. We deal with an unfortunate neighbor whose only political heritage has been that of centuries of oligarchy and autocracy. For a century and a quarter the Mexican people have had the benefit of close contact with a free people, governed under a democracy. The ignorance of the masses and the cupidity of the governing classes have made it impossible that precept alone should lead to the establishment of genuine constitutional government in Mexico. This nation cannot reasonably hope, therefore, to create a real democracy in that country by stipulating some condition or change in a contemporaneous régime, which in itself is the product of a nation's heritage.

Another distinct advantage to be gained from such a restriction of the Monroe Doctrine as indicated in the foregoing may also be

illustrated by reference to a feature of the current Mexican trouble. There can be no reasonable doubt that the interests of peace in Mexico could have been served best by the joint intervention of European countries and the United States. The present interpretation placed upon the Monroe Doctrine has made this seem inexpedient. There has been much misconception on this point, indicated by the apparent belief that such a course involved some danger to this country's foreign policy. It does not seem to have occurred to our statesmen that this may be very good evidence that there is something wrong with our foreign policy.

Citizens of Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Italy have interests at stake in Mexico at least commensurate with those of American citizens. There is every reason to believe that such interests were acquired quite as legitimately as were ours. Those countries should share with the United States the responsibility of securing protection for such interests. A joint treaty between these six countries embodying an agreement on the part of each to share financial and other responsibility and an obligation to refrain from accepting any indemnity in territory or funds in any eventuality would cause a light to break over Mexico such as can be supplied in no other way. This country can have no reason to doubt the absolute good faith in which European powers would participate in such an agreement.

The present policy is essentially that of a "dog in the manger." We cannot settle Mexico's troubles ourselves and we foolishly fear to ask those equally interested in peace there to help us effectively. It matters not what solution of the question comes from the present denouement, anarchy and chaos must return to Mexico under any circumstances to be determined by the United States alone, short of absolute conquest. The elimination of any one political despot is temporization, which can bring Mexico not one step nearer civilization, since it removes an effect and not the cause of that country's misfortune. The result, on the other hand, of European representation, jointly undertaken with the United States, would be so to overwhelm public opinion in Mexico as to force the few disinterested leaders to the fore and so bring about at least the beginning of a new era in Mexico. It is highly probable that such intervention would take the form of an international police for Mexico, to enforce the proper observance of constitutional provisions for free government.

But whatever might be the form of actual intervention, there can be no doubt that only in the hands of powerful European nations acting in concert with the United States can intervention become a wholly effective instrument, without involving loss of life or property to any considerable extent.

The United States has constantly faced the danger of serious international complications arising from the implied obligation which exists under the present form of the Monroe Doctrine. We do not concede to European powers the right to protect their nationals in Latin America, because such a course might endanger the continued application of more or less vague principles of that doctrine. We must, therefore, assume the responsibility of affording protection not only to our own nationals and to their property, but to the nationals of all European countries. The farcical manner in which even American citizens have been given protection to which they are entitled under the circumstances prevailing in Mexico indicates in a measure how absurd it is for this country to continue the voluntary assumption of this wholly unnecessary and dangerous burden. Far more critical situations may at any time result from such an assumption than could conceivably arise from an abandonment of this pernicious feature of our foreign policy.

There can be no manner of doubt that the policy followed by the United States in its application of the Monroe Doctrine to Spanish-American countries has served rather to estrange our neighbors than to make them our friends. In some countries on the west coast of South America there is a sentiment approving a kind of passive American paternalism, but only because the South American hegemony is feared more than aggression from the United States. This hegemony is a phase of international relations which has as yet been completely disregarded in this country's foreign policy. Chili and the Argentine Republic wish above everything else to eliminate the United States as a factor in South American international affairs. Brazil, for her own protection and more or less against her policy, is forced to participate in a sort of gentleman's agreement, which has become, in fact, the A B C hegemony of South America.

Argentina and Chili are both most vociferous in their objection to any form of Pan-American political union, believing that this means domination, in one form or another, by the United States.

They fear nothing from Europe, so if undisturbed by the United States, they could quickly dominate the west coast countries.

The Monroe Doctrine should not interfere with such ambitions, any more than it should prevent this country from settling with quick despatch any trouble it may have in South America. Should such a policy of *laissez faire* result in attempts of a stronger country to oppress the people of weaker nations, there could be no possible objection to the same kind of intervention which is proposed above as the proper solution of Mexican troubles.

The great nations of the world, with their advancement in civilization, their high standards of education and of what constitutes free government, owe much to the weaker nations of the western hemisphere. Their nationals have invested capital there with profit to themselves and their respective nations. Industrial and commercial conquest has taken the place of conquest of territory. The least that these nations can do in return is to unite in an effort to guarantee to the people of less advanced nations an opportunity to work out in peace their own problems looking to the establishment of governments, liberal in fact, and not liberal merely on paper.

The Monroe Doctrine, as originally conceived, although selfish in its specific intentions, was nevertheless calculated to assure the attainment of this very purpose. Its various interpretations have since modified it so radically that under existing circumstances it not only fails to do what is expected of it, but it serves as a serious obstacle to the employment of other means which can reasonably be expected to bring about a satisfactory solution of the problem.

(The author desires to state that this paper was submitted for publication May 14, 1914.)